

3 1761 07032353 0

Burwash, E. M.  
The new theology,  
a lecture

BT  
80  
B92



*Presented to the*  
LIBRARY *of the*  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
*by*  
Bert Hanson



# "The New Theology"

## A LECTURE

delivered before the Theological Union of the British Columbia Conference, at their Meeting in New Westminster, May, Nineteen Hundred and  

---

Nine

---

BY

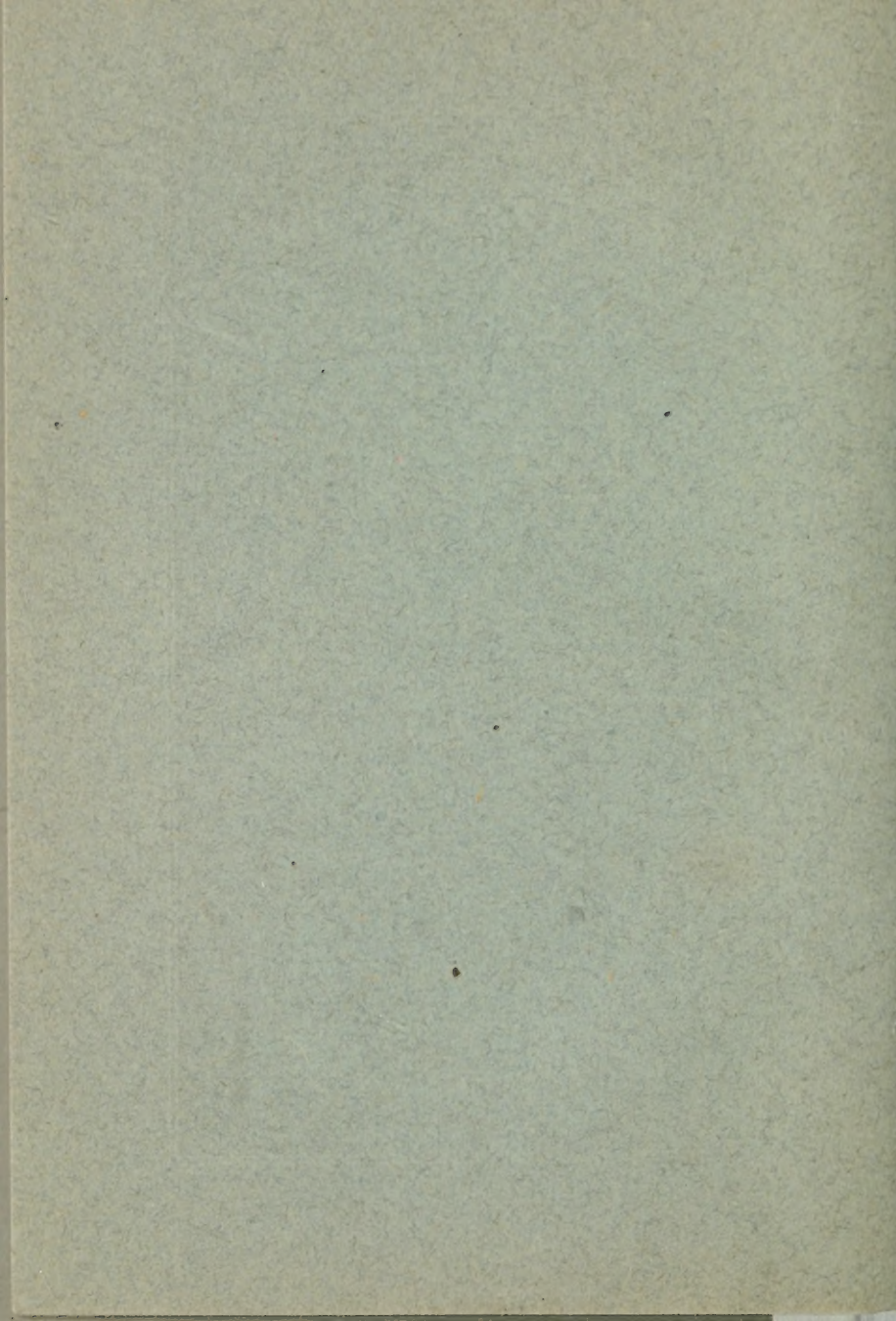
E. M. BURWASH, M.A., B.D.

---

TORONTO

WILLIAM BRIGGS

1910



# "The New Theology"

## A LECTURE

delivered before the Theological Union of the British Columbia Conference, at their Meeting in New Westminster, May, Nineteen Hundred and

—Nine—

BY

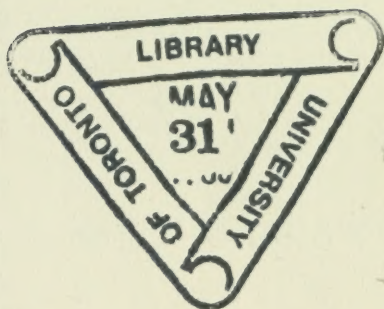
E. M. BURWASH, M.A., B.D.

---

TORONTO  
WILLIAM BRIGGS

1910





BT  
80  
B92

# INTRODUCTORY

(NOT BY THE AUTHOR.)

IN the lecture which is here given to the public, Prof. Burwash has made a timely and valuable contribution to the solution of some of the perplexing questions of modern religious thought. His introduction affirms with Illingworth the fundamental importance of personality as an element in religion, and especially in the religion of both Old Testament and New. In fact, the final result of religion as set forth in Scripture is nothing less than the restoration of right personal relations of a sinful man to a personal God, and nothing in our day should be more carefully guarded against than the obscuring of this by the conceptions of pantheistic forms of evolution.

The distinction between the fundamental character of the Hebrew mind and the Greek mind is valuable as leading up to the distinction between the direct truths of religious faith and the work of theology. Prof. Gardiner, in his work on the Bible as literature, has pointed out very clearly the peculiarities of Hebrew literature which flow from this mental characteristic. It is not too much to say that both the personal mental attitude of the Hebrew people and the directness and simplicity of mental expression which flow from it gave this people a peculiar fitness in the providence of God to be the recipients and prophets to the world of a revelation of personal salvation from sin and reconciliation to God. At the same time the scientific, philosophical

and critical habit of mind of the Greeks created for the Church the necessity for a theological exposition of this revelation, and gave it not only its first heresies but also, in such men as Origen and Augustine, its first theologians. The distinction is again important as guarding us against the confusion of the divinely revealed elements of personal faith in God with the theologies which attempt their philosophical exposition. The faith, as the lecturer has pointed out, is fundamentally the same to-day as in the time of Moses, though greatly enlarged. The theology changes with the advance of science, philosophy and accurate knowledge. The earliest creeds of the Church were not so much an attempt to construct a theology as to guard the faith by accurate definition against modifications of that faith to serve the purposes of an attempt at theology. Faith through revelation gives us the truth. Philosophy, science, in fact, all human thought and language, give us the terms by which it is imperfectly defined in our creeds or rationally expounded in our theology. The theology and even the creed is human, the faith divine. A new theology may be required by the advance in knowledge of the human intellect if it is to serve the purpose of a theology, *i.e.*, to set forth the harmony of revelation and reason. But while new, it still is old, for it must contain the fulness of the old faith. Hence the best theologies have had their origin, not in intellectual quickening alone, but still more in a great revival of spiritual faith.

The lecturer is brief yet comprehensive in his statement of the great essentials of the old faith. A personal God, sin as personal transgression breaking off the right relation of man to God, the mediation of Christ, the incarnate Son of God, for man's salvation,



the restoration of man to conscious right relation to God, a consciousness which grows with and at the same time increases the moral likeness to God in the man's soul,—these are the fundamental elements of the Christian faith. Over against these he places some of the difficulties of modern thought and the proposed modifications of those truths which he believes Christian faith must reject. The full development of the Baconian method creates a popular difficulty in the acceptance of the supernatural. But the supernatural may be regarded as but the presence of a personal God in His universe, to whose active will all the forces of natural law must be traced back as their first cause, and at that point they all pass into the supernatural. Under the law of evolution sin is but one of the steps in the necessary process by which man's moral nature is evolved. This necessitarian view is rejected in favor of a conception in which the will of man enters as a conscious moral and responsible force in working out his own destiny, and so sin is sin. These are examples of the conception set before us of a new and yet true theology.

On the question of the inspiration of Scripture the lecturer recognizes the difficulties created by the modern sciences of archæology and historical criticism. These he would remove by two important distinctions. First, he distinguishes between what he calls the jewel and the casket. The jewel is the religious faith, the moral and religious truth which shines forth from every part of Scripture. The casket is the literary, scientific and historical form, the human mode of thought in which the truth is set forth. This he recognizes as subject to the infirmities and limitations of humanity, and yet he acknowledges its great literary, historical and even scientific value. His second distinction is between the

true historical interpretation of Scripture and the traditional interpretation which has been wrapped around it as a husk, and which can often be traced back to a mediæval or rabbinical origin. The importance of these distinctions can scarcely be overestimated, for by their aid many of the modern difficulties disappear.

The lecturer recognizes the unsatisfactory position in which the man is placed who is striving to seek for a harmony of religious faith with modern thought. He stands between two extremes, and he can satisfy neither party. This, he thinks, is largely due to the "idols of the market place," the popular misconceptions which become attached to words, phrases and theories, both scientific and theological, in the popular mind. But in spite of this he does not despair of a new theology which shall be true as well as new, *i.e.*, true as far as the imperfection of all human knowledge permits, and at least will not impair the old faith with its saving and sanctifying power. Such a theology he considers essential to the success of the great missionary enterprise where, as in China and Japan, modern scientific thought is already in the field before us and has obtained an influence over these nations which must be met by a demonstration of the harmony of all truth, religious, scientific and philosophical.

## “THE NEW THEOLOGY”

It is not the purpose of this lecture merely to review the Rev. R. J. Campbell's book from either a friendly or hostile point of view, but to deal rather with the situation which the appearance of such a book indicates as existing, in some minds at least, and having enunciated some of the principles involved, to apply them briefly to Mr. Campbell's conclusions. This is a task which, if carried out in detail, might occupy a much greater time than the hour available; we shall have to confine ourselves, therefore, to the main outlines of the subject.

It is an old truism of the philosophers that the mind can occupy itself with but three subjects: the world, self, and God. Its activity in the first gives us science, in the second psychology and ethics, in the third religion, or, formally stated, theology. It may fairly be said, without reference to the doctrine of inspiration, that the European mind has excelled in science and psychology, while the eastern has had its greatest development in the sphere of religion and morals. This, of course, is not making the statement that the European mind is exclusively secular or the oriental exclusively religious.

European thought is typically logical, analytical and critical; it is what we now call either scientific or speculative. It observes the outward appearance of things, and by comparing and classifying them arrives at cer-



tain conclusions as to their underlying principles of movement and the laws of their structure and development. Being based largely on objective impressions received through the senses, scientific thought can, in strict logic, rise only to the consideration of the similarities and dissimilarities of these impressions, and to such principles as may be deduced from these comparisons. Moreover, it is strictly limited by its own past experience. It can make its generalizations only from those facts which have been observed; other facts there may be of which it knows nothing. It can forecast the future only in so far as that future may agree in its course of development with the past. It is not competent for science to say that facts of a different order from those with which it is familiar either can or cannot be true. It may, however, by its conclusions criticise the results arrived at more directly by the deeper self-consciousness, so far as these results, or their material or historical setting, traverse the ground which is proper to science.

It is not difficult to see that a mind which is predominantly of the scientific type will be strong from the side of the outward things of life, science, art, government and practical life generally, but less powerful on the side of the spiritual and deeper moral intuitions. Such, taken as a whole, was the intellect of Greece and Rome. Art, war, politics, literature and philosophy were carried to a high degree of perfection. In the latter two departments of thought the subjective personal element is indeed largely mixed with the objective, but the structure of even philosophic thought is based upon and harmonized with the scientific conceptions of the thinker. In Greece and Rome, however, a great conception of God as personal, though reached in

exceptional cases, was never popularized. Illingworth,\* indeed, holds that in the purely Greek mind the conception of personality, as we understand it, was never fully developed, even as applied to men.

The oriental mind, on the other hand, is deeply impressed with the sense of personality. It deals with outward appearances, not as fundamental existences, but as the outer manifestations of "something far more subtly interfused," a spiritual or supernatural reality, of whose character the forms and movements of the outward may indeed be manifestations, but which exists in and for itself independently of the outward, and also independently of other existences similar to itself. The Jewish mind was struck, when brought into contact with the marvellous, not so much with its apparent contradiction of the natural order, although they saw that, but more with the personal or spiritual *presence* of which it was the indication. The Greek or Roman historian, in dealing with a great man, describes accurately his appearance, education, habits, modes of thought and action and the results attained; seldom does he penetrate beyond what is externally visible or immediately deducible from observation. The Egyptian, on the other hand, in order to account for the performances of a great man, ascribes to him personally the attributes of a divinity, feeling that the distinction is not merely one of outer circumstance and appearance, but of inner reality and quality. I mention this superstitious instance to show that the oriental mind, apart from inspiration, had the great fundamental power which, however grotesque the forms in which it might show itself, was necessary to constructive processes of

---

\* Bampton Lectures, 1894.

religious thought, namely, the instinct of personality, and its relationships of connection with and opposition to (*i.e.*, distinction from) other personalities. Out of this conception spring all the profounder conceptions of moral relationship, that is, relationship of man to man, as well as the still deeper relationships of man to God. It is not to be wondered at, in view of this peculiarity, that it should be the Hebrew rather than the Greek mind which was chosen as the vehicle of revelation. The Greek conception corresponding to "spirit" was the idea, the intellectual abstraction of the outward appearance; it did not furnish the materials for the conception of personal relationship in its emotional and volitional aspects. It was to the Hebrew conception as the shuddering and whistling ghosts of Hades, irresponsible or injurious to human contact, are to the living, feeling, vitalized personalities of which we are conscious in real life.

With the Greeks morality consisted in a certain restraint upon action imposed upon the individual by himself for the ultimate advantage of himself or the state; it was not conceived as a personal relationship at all. This, it will readily be seen, is due to a limitation inherent in their method of thought, and growing naturally out of the foundation upon which they built, namely, the sensational, rather than the introspective. In all scientific thought we approach continually toward a conception of unity, of underlying laws which embrace and govern the whole universe, and these conceptions are the ultimate ones for science. Their generality and abstractness does not tend toward a *feeling* of personality, however, which is in most minds of a distinct and concrete nature.



It is true of both types of mind that they begin with the outward and move toward the personal from that starting-point. But one looks upon the outward as fundamental, real in itself, the other as the expression of personality. In this process pure logic is transcended and an appeal is made to the self-consciousness, which recognizes instinctively the independent existence of the self, its control over the physical, its relation to other personalities, and its relation to an ideal personality or source of all other existences, both physical and personal, of which its own dim consciousness is an imperfect copy. The Europe and America of to-day are the result of the confluence of these two great streams of thought. The distinction between the two, involving as it does a radical difference both in the point of view and method of analysis, could not fail to be accentuated at their first contact, and the problems involved in the reconciliation of the two systems of thought have presented themselves for solution and provoked controversy in nearly every century of the Christian era.

In the Greek philosophy we have in pre-Socratic times an effort to reduce the physical universe to a unity, and as a result a theory of atoms not unlike the modern theory of the same name. Having proceeded as far as their purely physical basis of thought would lead them, a tendency toward materialism and agnosticism became evident, but was overcome later by the teachings of Socrates and Plato. They appealed not to the evidence of the senses but to the good which exists in man and to the spiritual nature or self-consciousness with which he is endowed, or, in a sense, to faith. In these, they held, lay the argument for the existence of a God who was self-existent and beyond all cause, himself the cause of all. As we see goodness and justice in the world,

the maker of all must himself be good and just. He is, in fact, the Good, or the Idea of the Good, or Goodness itself. In another place Plato speaks of him as the maker and father of the universe.

Aristotle, though with less of religious feeling than Plato, elaborates his idea of God more scientifically.\* He criticises Plato for separating his ideas so completely from the material world, and himself regards the ideas, or rational principles of things, as immanent in nature, like the order in an army, while only the highest idea is immaterial and exists apart, like the general in an army. This highest idea or form is God, who is pure reason, and whose eternal and continuous activity consists in contemplative thought. And as this reason can have no adequate object outside itself, it must be its own object, and contemplate itself. Hence the divine life consists in self-contemplation. And though God, therefore, does not actively influence the world, He is the cause of all its life and movement as being the universal object of desire. "Himself unmoved, all motion's source." Here we have the highest attainment of uninspired, speculative intellect. It lacks, as we have before indicated, the vitalizing elements of personality—the outgoing of divine love which is powerful to give life to dead souls. In order to reach even this point the purely logical discussion of the facts observed through the senses is quite inadequate, though it serves as a guide for part of the way by indicating that beneath the multifariousness of external things an underlying unity must exist whose nature is of a rational sort.

Although Plato went beyond this by calling in the moral consciousness as evidence of the morality, as well

---

\*Illingworth, *op. cit.*

as the rationality, of the ultimate reality, his conception is little more than a rationally conceived idea, and falls far short of a felt presence. Plato and Aristotle proceeded far enough, however, to form a connecting link between the scientific and philosophical mind and revealed truth, a link whose forging was part of the providential preparation for the fulfilment of the desire of nations when the fulness of the time was come.

Turning to the East, we find, as already pointed out, a much fuller conception of personality and its powers throughout a wide area and among diverse tribes and nations. The Egyptians attached to their gods and to the guardian spirits of their dead such epithets as "Divine Father," "Giver of life," "Lord of truth and justice," and believed in the soul, judgment of the dead, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Their religious conceptions were hedged about with gross naturalism and polytheism, and it was only to Israel, with its fundamental monotheism, that the higher truth could be revealed. Their conception of God immediately after their escape from Egypt has been universally accepted by Christian theologians as forming the basis upon which later developments, including Christianity itself, were reared.

God was announced at the burning bush as I AM, the self-existent one, the first cause. He will tolerate no rival. He is a jealous God in the sense that His nature demands holiness, that is, exclusive consecration to himself. He inspires reverence. Moses must put off his shoes in His presence, and His name is not to be lightly invoked. He enters actively into human relationships, punishing sin and forgiving the repentant. He is the leader and deliverer of His people. Here is



the abstract Greek conception clothed with concrete personal qualities and entering into personal communion with men.

Whatever dates we may assign to the books of the Old Testament, it is evident that they all have a common purpose, the amplification and practical application in thought and action of the idea of a personal God. The motif of the historical books is the tracing of the divine element in the history of Israel, and the interpretation of that history in terms of providential guidance.\* "I brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt . . . and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt." In the Psalms the glory of God is seen in nature, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and in the prophets His will is declared in the inner voice of conscience, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I, send me." The development of thought traceable in Old Testament times is perhaps not so much as to the character of God in its essentials, but as to the needs of man in relation to Him, and the possibility of atonement.

It would occupy too much time to trace the development of the Hebrew conception of God from the Mosaic revelation, as it heightened and broadened through the long line of prophets, until "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among men, and they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth."

In introducing this message to the European world, the difficulties encountered were what might have been expected from the foregoing considerations. The Greek

---

\*Joshua 24: 6, 7.

intellect sought rather after scientific and philosophic wisdom, and the preaching of the cross was to them foolishness, a personal relationship, not a philosophy. Not many wise and not many mighty were among those who responded to the call at first. But when official recognition was at last secured, and a statement of the fundamental Christian ideas in dogmatic form was required, certain conditions became clearly apparent.

(1) A number of attempts to harmonize the faith with the already existing scientific and philosophical conceptions had arisen, and the mind of the Church with regard to these attempts, as expressed at the Council of Nicea and later councils, was that in trying to intellectualize Christianity they had robbed it of its vitalizing element, namely, its strongly personal relation to God, by shifting the emphasis from a moral to a sensational centre. This would bring us back to pantheism and naturalism, which were precisely the forms of intellectual wisdom by which the Greek world had failed to know God, that is to say, to be brought into moral harmony with Him. For personal relationships are moral relations, not relationships of space or time or matter. If I meet a man, his size, features, coloring, expression, dress, manners, energy and the like make impressions on my senses, and it is not unusual to hear the sum total of these impressions spoken of as the man's *personality*, but a slight amount of consideration leads us to conclude that they are at most but superficial indications of what that personality really is. If I would know the man intimately, I must enter into relationships with him which involve moral responsibility and an effort of will both on my part and his, and to come to a perfect understanding the emotions of both must be called forth, and finally the mind must

reflect upon the personal experience passed through. All of this is necessary before I can be said to know the man as he is. The same considerations apply to the knowledge of God. It is not to be gained by a scientific or philosophical study of the natural laws which we see in operation and which affect our lives. These laws may be binding upon us as indicating the will of the Creator, and by inference some knowledge of His nature, but laws in themselves are not personal. There are many schools of thought which hold that these laws are an exhibition of impersonal power, which makes for righteousness, it is true, yet does not necessarily indicate the presence of the only kind of cause which can be itself righteous, that is, a personal God.

The personal knowledge of God is not to be attained by criticising the truths of Christianity by certain standards of a scientific and philosophical nature. This was the kind of process that gave rise to the early heresies and was combated by the early Church councils. This knowledge of God can only be arrived at by seeking Him for himself. As we must make a human friendship an object in itself, not a mere adjunct of other interests, if we expect it to attain to full development, so, also, but in a far more important sense, must we make our relationship with God an end in itself, a specialty, to be pursued without regard to the multitude of other interests, intellectual, material, social, or of whatever sort, that demand a place in our lives. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and it is only he that doeth the will of the Father in heaven who can know of the doctrine, whether it be of him.\* “Moral

---

\*Illingworth, *op. cit.*



affinity is an essential of personal intimacy," or, rather, neither can advance without the other.

It was the clear perception of this point that led to the early development of the great group of doctrines dealing with the person of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity. These were felt to be necessary safeguards against an abstract tendency which would have robbed Christianity of its vital energy, and they remain to-day among the most necessary bulwarks of the faith. They were so stated as to deny the tendencies to which they were opposed, rather than to seek to give positive scientific definition to the truths which they supported. In fact, the terms in which these truths could have been accurately expressed did not then exist in the language of philosophy, and it is doubtful whether after fifteen hundred years of Christian thought we are yet ready for a complete philosophical formulation of these dogmas, to say nothing of those branches of doctrine which are as yet only in the formative stage. Philosophic thought since that time has nevertheless progressed a great deal under the influence of Christianity, and many terms have been developed which are quite accurately definitive of certain aspects of Christian truth and at the same time parts of a sound psychology. The great conception of personality itself as developed by Kant and based by him scientifically upon introspective observation, is of this class. From this our doctrine of the Trinity may be now more scientifically treated. The human personality is first of all self-conscious, that is, it is conscious of itself as existing. It not only exists and thinks, and may be so considered as independent, subjective existence, but it thinks of itself as existing, and is therefore the object of its own thought as well as the thinking subject. Thirdly, it exists in relation-

ship to other personalities, and thinks of itself as standing in such relationships. If self-consciousness be the test of personality, then complete self-consciousness is the mark of perfect or complete personality, and we must think of God as perfectly self-conscious in all three aspects of His being; in other words, in the divine nature there are three persons. The three aspects are also present in human consciousness, but being each in itself imperfect, we have only one complete self-consciousness.

It is evident that here the human personality is the basis from which we rise, philosophically, to a conception of the divine nature, and it is equally evident that that nature is nevertheless distinct from any purely human personality, not only as a separate personality, but also in its completeness and perfection.

In general, it may be said that while faith supplies the truths of Christianity, philosophy must supply the terms in which these truths can be accurately stated, and only a philosophy or a language which has developed under the influence of the faith can furnish the terms necessary to clearly define it. Theology as a science has advanced, therefore, both in content and in power of expression, and may be expected to continue to do so in the future. As it advances new forms of expression must arise and new elements may be added, and in these senses it is quite evident that we must be prepared for new theology. Such developments, in so far as they are due to advancement in scientific and philosophic thought, must largely be re-statements of the old theology, and additions must in general arise, as they have in the past, out of new spiritual movements in the Church. In support of the latter statement it need only be pointed out that the first developments of

doctrine were inspired by the Christian consciousness as distinct from philosophic speculation, and that the same thing is true of all important developments since. The views of Augustine, Anselm and Luther were in every case the result of personal religious experience, even while their method of expression might be, and was, drawn from the prevailing philosophy of their times. Thus Anselm, while following the syllogistic methods of Aristotle, has given us the great maxim, "I believe that I may understand. I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe." ("Credo ut intelligam. Non quaero intelligere ut credam.")

In order to understand the present situation, therefore, in the development of doctrine, we must consider two great factors, first the prevailing type of spiritual life, and second, the present trend of intellectual activity. How intimately associated these are, and how difficult it is to make a demarcation between them, will appear as we proceed.

The period of the Reformation gave birth to a number of great movements, of which perhaps only two or three need be mentioned in this connection. The spiritual movement is well known, even though not as generally understood as the ecclesiastical reconstruction to which it led. The movement toward political freedom which became apparent at the same time, and, aided by the discovery of new lands, has given us a new world of social and political life, as well as of soil and opportunity, is a commonplace of historical study. Volumes have been written to show that the genius of Protestantism and of free political institutions are closely related if not identical, and we may here take it for granted that this position is sound. The intellectual revival which took place at the same time as

the spiritual and political, was due to the introduction into Western Europe of the Greek language and literature, and its distinctive motive of thought, the spirit of free enquiry, as opposed to the rigid traditionalism, embalmed in the forms of Aristotelian logic, which had dominated the Middle Ages. Its general character may therefore be said to accord in principle with that of the political and religious movements of the same age. Its assertion of the right of freedom to seek truth was in essence the same as the demand of the soul to seek God untrammelled by the bonds of ecclesiasticism, and of the citizen to seek justice by a voice in the management of his own affairs.

While all these movements thus asserted the right of the human mind to freedom, they did not demand an undue or unjust amount of liberty, nor was their demand merely the rejection of an old order which had failed to meet human needs: but in each case certain definite methods of attaining those needs, largely new in character, were substituted for the old. In the spiritual sphere, new conceptions of personal salvation by faith (new in the sense of having been lost sight of since New Testament times), a personal and direct relation between the soul and God, replaced the old formal relationship in which a legally organized system of ecclesiasticism intervened between them, and thus was re-emphasized the early conception of the importance of personality, and direct personal relationship as the basis of effective religious life. Development along this line down to the time of Wesley has given us a conception of this personal relationship as not only real, but also as *conscious* on man's part. It is a relationship which deepens as man achieves greater moral affinity with God, and which produces that



affinity as it deepens, a relationship involving all sides of man's nature, intellect, feeling and will in harmonious co-operation. This relationship is mediated through Christ, but Christ is himself God, historically revealed in the incarnation, being, as we have seen, that person of the divine nature which is conceived as God manifesting himself. He is distinct from men both in being divine, and a separate person; he comes into direct, sympathetic and manifest contact with them in being also human.

This possibility of harmonious relationship with God implies also the possibility of a breach of that relationship; and the necessity of a divine human mediator to make atonement can be sustained only on the supposition that all have consciously sinned and come short of the glory of God. This may be here given as in brief the position of what we would have to call the old theology as distinct from the system to which the term "new theology" has of late been applied.

As the form which the reformation of religion in the sixteenth century took may be said to have been given to it by Luther and his associates, and to have been brought down to the present by such men as Calvin, Arminius, Jeremy Taylor, Wesley, and others, so also the character of the purely intellectual movement which began at the same time was foreshadowed and largely determined by Francis Bacon, in his great work, the *Novum Organum* (New World). He himself calls the new type of thought the inductive method, and speaks of the knowledge to be obtained from it as science. It supplemented the older deductive logic which, beginning with preconceived or traditional ideas, had failed to advance human knowledge by its syllogistic treatment, by a new reference to nature. "There

remains," says Bacon, "only one way of safe and healthy action; it is that the whole work of the mind should be recommenced anew, and then, in opening and constructing a new and certain way for the mind from the very perceptions of the senses." He defines his new way or method as the interpretation of nature based upon observation of facts and as opposed to the old syllogistic system which is, he says, based upon the anticipation of nature, that is, reading a meaning into nature in accordance with the preconceptions of the mind, rather than seeking for that meaning which a careful and dispassionate analysis of the facts of nature will give us. He recognizes that the human mind is not a "dry light," but is liable to look for explanations in certain directions consonant with its own nature, as, for example, that "the . . . intellect, from its peculiar nature, easily supposes a greater order and equality in things than it actually finds; and, while there are many things in nature unique and quite irregular, still it feigns parallels, correspondents and relations which have no existence." In other words, the mind tends to recognize underlying unity in nature wherever apparent, and to forget the diversity which is also present. The method which he lays down, then, is that of strict observation and experiment.

It must be said that after some three hundred years of scientific progress, the tendency of the mind toward unity is as manifest as ever in scientific study. The result of the laborious collection of vast numbers of new observations, and the comparison and classification of them, of almost infinite experiment and research, has been the revelation of underlying principles of unity in nature which were not even dreamed of in Bacon's day. Nearly all that must have then seemed unique and

irregular has been assigned to its place in a vast system of natural laws. Like the tiny leaves of a gigantic tree, every minute fact is now seen to lead backward through ever-converging branches toward some great prime mover from which it derives its existence and character. The scientific specialist may still judge of this work by the number of diverse facts which he can keep in view, but the popular mind is impressed only with the reign of universal law, and the onward march of vast processes which seem to be ends in themselves, and to have no personal significance whatever. They are grand abstractions and are all grouped together and referred back to a final abstraction known as nature, whose laws are conceived of as the ultimate goal to which the human mind can attain. This effect has been produced largely by the great advances and results achieved in the last century by the physical sciences. In the popular mind the impression has been greatly intensified by the co-ordinate progress of invention based largely on scientific discovery and the complete revolution in economic and social conditions which it has entailed. This immense advance has so strengthened the authority of scientific teaching that the man in the street has only to be told that science teaches this, or contradicts that, to accept or reject the doctrine affected at once. The question as to the kind of science, and whether it has any real bearing on the question involved, is one which he never thinks of, and is not qualified to decide if he did. Hence, in practical Christian work we are often called upon to deal with what Bacon calls the "idols of the market place," namely, the fact that the popularly accepted meaning of words makes them imply or express a great deal more than their strictly defined significance would warrant. Such words as evolution,

law of nature, myth, legend, have been broadened in some minds until the acceptance of the theories for which they stand are synonymous with a denial of creation, God's providence, inspiration, etc. It is indeed true that to some intellects, both scientific and theological, many of the new scientific theories of the last century have seemed to exclude God or personality from the universe, and the agnosticism of the middle of the century, on the one hand, and a determined hostility to science on the part of churchmen, on the other, has been the result. But from this condition of things we have passed into a time when numerous ways of escape are presenting themselves to patient thinkers, and many problems which fifty years ago seemed to present hopeless difficulties, are no longer regarded as serious. The change in mental outlook on the physical side has indeed been almost revolutionary, though when examined in the broader aspects it appears rather as an expansion than a contradiction of old ideas.

If you enquire what this has to do in essence with things spiritual, the answer is "*nothing*," but in saying this we must not overlook the fact that the human mind is not able to express itself in spiritual matters, hardly even to think coherently without reference to physical analogies and imagery of various sorts. We require a physical setting for our religious conceptions, and so long as we are enclosed in this muddy vesture of decay it is probable that we shall continue so to do. The revelation of divine truth has been given to us enclosed in an antique casket of ancient scientific and historical thought, the thought of the time in which its records were written. This envelope is well adapted to the purpose of containing the treasure enclosed in it. It is itself of great historical value, and without it the con-



tents could not have been preserved. But the time has come when the science of the ancient world is no longer adequate. In other words, we may have to readjust the form in which we express our beliefs to changed conceptions of the physical universe, of history, or of the nature of prophecy, but it is not necessary that in so doing they should lose their import.

The best example of the change that is taking place is perhaps the instance of the antiquity of man as now understood compared with former conceptions. Geology finds him existing at a date immensely earlier than had once been supposed. He existed during a long prehistoric period in a rude and uncivilized condition. Biology adds "that his physical frame at least was developed from some lower animal form." The civilized world had been accustomed to the existence of savage tribes, few in numbers and scattered upon the outskirts of civilization. Their state was ascribed to a process of degeneration, and the original state of man was held to be high spiritually if not civilized in the material sense. "But when the whole proportion and scale of these things is suddenly transformed, and savagery, instead of representing the mere fringe of failure around human progress, is represented as the normal condition of our race during far the greater part of its existence, the result is a stupendous shock to all our preconceived ideas."\* We see the whole development of the race as a process involving millenniums of savagery which appears "too cold-blooded for the warm temperament of grace." In reality, however, these facts, ascertained by research, are for the most part absolutely neutral as regards their bearing on spiritual truth,

---

\*Illingworth, *op. cit.*

while such positive indications as they do give are of a helpful character. We have no reason to think that during the long transition from brute to man, if such there was, proper provision of grace was not made for man according to his condition, and many reasons to suppose that such provision was made, of which his final emergence as a morally responsible and spiritually conscious being is perhaps the chief. The process, slow as it was, was an upward process. But when Mr. R. J. Campbell argues that the old conception of sin, with its moral guilt, and the sense of responsibility for sin based upon the story of the Fall must be given up in favor of the idea that sin is merely the evidence of growth, that every step forward, as in walking, is only gained by taking advantage of the tendency to fall, we think that he goes too far in making concessions to what he conceives to be scientific truth, and mistakes the nature of the process of moral development entirely. Sin is not a mere mistake such as a child might make in learning to walk. It is a violation of conscious personal obligation. The fact that King David, without conscious guilt, did things in his day which none here could now do without such consciousness, does not affect the problem. For moral and spiritual growth, as we have seen, can mean only a growth in the practical and intellectual realization of our personal relationship to God. God, we are told, in this humane age, is not to be looked upon any longer as a judge, standing in awful separation apart from our human guilt; and yet if we admit that man is continuously struggling upward, and if God is behind the process, it is difficult to see how God can be other than lawfully the judge of man's actions, and exalted in holiness above him. Any other hypothesis makes God an imperfect creature, subject to change,

improving, it is true, but only a step or two, if at all, ahead of the best men of any given time. His personality, we are told, is one with that of man, "as the ocean is one with the bay," that is to say, the same identically in kind, but greater in inclusiveness. The three persons of the Trinity are three modes of His activity. In all this we see a weakening of the fundamental conceptions for which Christianity has stood from the first, the only conceptions which furnish a basis (in responsibility) for the continuous moral and spiritual uplift of man.

This new conception of God, we are given to understand, is based upon our knowledge of God as immanent, as realizing himself in creation, and limiting himself in order to realize himself. But we have already seen God realizing himself in the second person of the Trinity, by whom all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made. But in Christ God realizes himself as much more than the Creator, and the best of men, or even the ideal man. The historic Christ was not only a man without consciousness of sin, but a man with wholly exceptional consciousness of unity with God, not merely in the sense of harmony, but of identity, a consciousness not possessed by any other man and which enabled Him to bring other men into harmony with God simply by bringing them into harmony with himself. The immanence of God is no new idea. It means that the world has been brought into existence and is maintained by the divine power, that the divine thought determines its forms and course of development, and that the divine love is manifested in its adjustment of living and feeling creatures to their environment. It does not imply that the world—or man—is in any sense God, and it

is distinct from the idea of omnipresence. Great as the expansion and readjustment of this idea under our modern scientific development may be, it cannot take the place of the transcendent God, the God who is above and distinct from all His creation. It is there that the height and the depth, the intensity, of divine revelation lies. It may well be that its length and breadth, its extensity, lies in our knowledge of God as immanent in His works. The advancement of thought is certainly changing our ethical conceptions, as it broadens the circle of our personal relationships. No morally earnest man can now do some things that our forefathers did a hundred years ago without thought of wrong. The sense of the moral unity of mankind, brought near to one another by improved means of travel, is impressed upon us as never before. The growing interdependence of the various parts of the social fabric is extending and deepening our sense of moral responsibility. New powers which did not exist a century since are being considered in their moral aspects, and as a result new spheres of duty and service are being developed. The practical applications of Christian thought are increasing on every hand. Hence our conceptions of God as immanent have religious value for us individually mainly as calls to higher endeavor and greater obligation.

In the meantime, we must remember that the inductive method, or scientific thought, is a habit of mind, a way of attacking problems, and not merely a mass of new information with regard to physical matters. This method is being applied in other fields than those of the physical universe. It consists essentially in first studying and tabulating all the available facts in the case under consideration, and then putting upon them that construction or interpretation, and only that, which



they will bear. It is in this way that the sciences of archaeology and historical criticism, as applied to the study of Scripture, are making themselves felt. Old methods of interpretation, rendered venerable by tradition, are in some cases being discarded. This is not attacking the Scriptures, if reverently done, but stripping it of certain husks of misconception, generally of rabbinical or scholastic origin, which grew up around it at a time when neither so great a range of facts, as at present, nor the logical methods for applying them, were known or understood. Here again we have change, and with the change a tension and struggle in many minds. It is well that discussion should be frank and full, for only out of such a heat can, thoroughly tempered results be expected.

It will be seen that we have not attempted to predict in detail what the ultimate results of present controversies will prove to be; the process is not far enough advanced to enable us to do so. We have contented ourselves with pointing out certain elements which we think must be conserved, and indicating the general line upon which restatement and reconstruction are going on. We do not view the process from a pessimistic, but from an optimistic, point of view, as one of the necessary preparations for a new era of expansion.

In the meantime, it is inevitable that hasty and superficial attempts should be made either to stop the progress of the change or to anticipate its conclusions. Among the latter we would include, as regards many of the positions taken, the book whose title suggested that of this lecture. It is in many ways interesting and suggestive, but written in a figurative style which is not adequate for scientific exposition, and often carries the writer beyond the point where he should pause to make allow-

ance for facts which are not of outward but of inward origin. It is well that we should not be rash in our efforts to steady the ark of God, even though the oxen shake it. Now, as ever, the movement of secular thought is accomplishing its ordained purpose and leading to great though unseen results in the providence of God. This caution applies to both classes of impatience, the conservative and the radical.

In closing, we may well ask if it is possible to forecast these results so far as to see any practical advantage to be gained. In reply to this we offer but one suggestion of many that are possible. We think that in the present prevalence of scientific thought, and the readjustment of Christian teaching to it, we see the means by which the great final missionary effort, to which the Christian world is now arousing itself, may be carried to successful completion. Medical science is now well established as the handmaid of missions. China, India and Japan are as yet far from being won to Christ, but they have been won to scientific thought, which is fast becoming a common medium of intellectual commerce the world over. In doing so it has replaced a great variety of older philosophical and physical conceptions by a common set of ideas, terms and methods of thinking, and it is by taking advantage of these that the Gospel may most easily win its way.

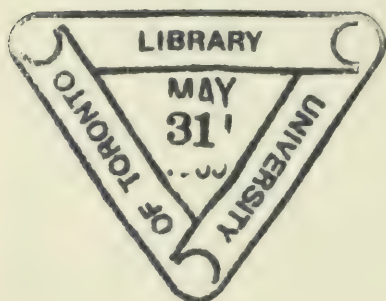
## NOTE TO PAGE 24.

---

A question which avowedly or tacitly influences many minds at the present time is that of the relationship of miracle, and the supernatural in general to natural law. It is often assumed that miracle is a violation of natural law, and that science must therefore be essentially opposed to admitting its possibility. It is readily to be admitted that science knows nothing of miracles. They are events of such rare occurrence as to elude observation and classification. It is true that many facts long supposed to be due to supernatural causes, have been reduced by modern investigation to a place in the regular order of nature. Science is also recognizing the control of mind over physical forces in many cases.

Should we be confronted with an undoubted miracle, a thing which has not happened within the modern era of scientific thought, it is probable that we should be able to define it, not as a violation, but as a supersession, of the laws with which we have been familiar. In this sense the first appearance of life on this planet was as much a miracle as the resurrection itself. It meant simply the introduction of a new force, acting under its own laws, and able to supersede the previously acting laws which alone would not have produced the observed result, and tend to cause its disappearance when the new force is removed.

Physical science, therefore, has very little to say about miracle, except that it must involve the action of causes which are usually absent, so far as our senses inform us, and this is exactly what is meant by saying that a miracle has happened. Every miracle, therefore, must be attested by its own individual evidences, science can neither affirm nor deny its possibility, although, regarded from a scientific standpoint, such events wear, *prima facie*, an air of improbability.









27-  
**PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET**

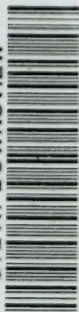
---

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY**

---



UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C

39 10 07 05 11 013 1